

**Patent Claims**

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1. Use of collagenase 3 as a prognostic clinical marker for the detection of destructive joint diseases.
  2. Use according to Claim 1, wherein collagenase 3 is used for prognosis of the progression of rheumatoid arthritis (RA).
  3. Use according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein the collagenase 3 mRNA expression is determined qualitatively and quantitatively.
  4. Use according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein the collagenase 3 antigen, both as a pro-enzyme and also in an activated form, is determined qualitatively and quantitatively.
  5. Use according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein the catalytic activity of the activated collagenase 3 is detected.
  6. Use according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein the quantitative relationships between collagenase 3 and its specific or unspecific inhibitors, as the case may be, are determined by determination of free collagenase 3 protein and of the same bound in complexes with inhibitors and compared.
  7. Use according to one of the Claims 1 to 6, wherein the detection is done in tissues and body fluids.
  8. Use according to Claim 7, wherein synovial membrane preparations, cartilage and bone preparations or preparations of the synovial membrane/cartilage interface, obtained in synovectomies, artificial joint replacement, inter alia operative interventions, and also in biopsies are used as tissue.
  9. Use according to Claim 7, wherein synovial fluid or blood are used as body fluids.

10. Use according to Claim 1, wherein collagenase 3 is used for the detection of an increased genetic predisposition for rheumatoid arthritis (RA).
11. Use of the increase of the clinical relevance of the meaningfulness according to one of Claims 1 to 10, wherein not only collagenase 3, but also further markers such as HLA antigens for the detection of a more severe progression of RA or markers such as certain patterns of HLA antigens for the detection of an increased genetic predisposition are used.
12. Use according to one of the Claims 1 to 11, wherein not only collagenase 3, but also MT1-MMP and/or gelatinase A act as prognostic markers by determination of their mRNA or protein expression, their amount and localisation or their catalytic activity in tissues or body fluids, as the case may be.